

NORTHAMPTON HAMPSHIRE GAZETTE
15 March 1985

Judge orders fine or public service in CIA trespass case

By MARK SENNOTT

A judge yesterday ordered a University of Massachusetts student and a recent graduate to pay a fine or perform community service for their arrest on trespassing charges during a demonstration disrupting CIA recruiting at the Amherst campus.

Hampshire District Court Judge Alvertus J. Morse stopped short of issuing a verdict yesterday, and continued the case against the two defendants — Perry M. Amsellem, 27, a senior legal studies major, and Lisa M. Sheehy, 25, a UMass graduate who lives at 1106 North Pleasant St. in Amherst. The trial drew attention because of the defendants' efforts to call into question the activities of the CIA in Central America. A large crowd of supporters gathered at the courthouse.

Morse found that there were sufficient facts to warrant a guilty verdict, but continued the case without a finding for six months, which means that there can be no appeal.

The two were arrested Nov. 5 by UMass police. Each was charged with one count of trespassing after they refused to leave a room occupied by two CIA recruiters at Hampshire House. They said they went to the room to protest CIA actions in Nicaragua.

The defendants represented themselves at yesterday's trial, which was preceded by a demonstration outside the courthouse by about 100 people carrying signs protesting CIA activity in Central America.

The courtroom quickly filled up with spectators prior to yesterday's proceedings and the doors were closed. But they were reopened when people in the hallway outside the courtroom began chanting, "We want to hear."

"My purpose was to petition the CIA for redress of grievances," Amsellem testified. "I felt I had a right as a citizen of this nation, and not only a right but an obligation to be there to stop crimes so heinous that they are on the same level as Nazi war crimes."

Ms. Sheehy testified she defied university officials' warnings that she was in violation of the ban on protesting in campus offices because she was "adhering to a higher law than the picketing code."

The defendants said they were invoking protection under international law and principles espoused at war trials after World War II.

Richard A. Falk, a Princeton University international law professor, testified that those principles gave the defendants the right as citizens to take reasonable action to try to stop violations.

"It is very reasonable for American citizens to believe that the U.S. government is violating international law by the situation in Central America," Falk testified.

Morse agreed the students had a right to petition their government, but said it was a question of how long that right lasts.

The confrontation last fall at UMass lasted between 20 minutes and an hour and delayed two interviews, according to various accounts.

Morse ordered each defendant to decide by April 11 whether to pay a \$50 fine or perform 15 hours of community service.

Assistant District Attorney Rosemary Tarantino argued that the defendants in exercising their First Amendment rights had infringed on the rights of others, mainly the students who wanted to be interviewed by the CIA.